



**SUMMER/FALL  
2011**

## **Amazing Grace**

### **Bagpipers Reflect on NJDOC Pipes and Drum Band**

In the beginning – actually, the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – there were Dan McNeill and Keith Allen.

The New Jersey Department of Corrections' contingent of bagpipers for ceremonial appearances consisted of those two officers and nobody else.

That all changed in April 2003, when the NJDOC Pipes and Drums Band was formed to perform at the Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association (MASCA) conference, which was held in Atlantic City that year. These days, the band often has as many as five pipers and four drummers at its performances. That includes both McNeil, a longtime officer at Southern State Correctional Facility, and Allen, who has retired from the department but continues to play with the band as frequently as his schedule permits.



The NJDOC Pipes and Drums Band rehearses prior to a recent performance.  
Photo by Scott Franks

Other bagpipers include Wes Butts (New Jersey State Prison), Stuart Carkeek (Mid-State Correctional Facility) and the band's newest member, Stephen Schwartzer (New Jersey State Prison). Drummers are Sam Beaver (Office of County Services), James Russo (Central Transportation Unit), Tom Januszkiewicz (Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility) and Mike Jordan (Garden State Youth Correctional Facility). All are senior correction officers except for Beaver, who is a lieutenant.

"We've certainly grown," said McNeill, recalling the early days, "but it hasn't been easy. It's hard for us to recruit new members, because unfortunately, we simply don't have the time or wherewithal to teach someone how to play the bagpipes. Every now and then, we get lucky and someone with real talent comes to us. That's what happened recently with Steve Schwartzer. We're always looking for more guys like him."

Schwartzer, who debuted with the band in the spring of 2011, is an accomplished musician who plays a variety of instruments, among them the drums, guitar and bass. He learned to play the bagpipes just a few years ago, and when he approached Butts – a co-worker at New Jersey State Prison – about joining the band, he received an enthusiastic response.

"For as far back as I can remember, I'd go to a parade, see someone playing the bagpipes and think to myself that I have to give it a shot," Schwartzer related. "I finally got bagpipes and followed through, like I'd been promising myself for all those years. It's not an instrument that's easy to learn to play, and what's been really difficult, at least for me, has been to learn to play well.

"The guys in this band have been great," he continued. "Not only are they friendly and supportive, but they'll help you along any time you might be having trouble. I'm the new guy, and these guys have been playing for years. For me, it's feels like I joined the big leagues."

The band performs at an array of NJDOC functions, ranging from Office of Training graduations to memorial services. They also represent the department at blue masses and other multi-agency functions throughout the state as well as funerals for NJDOC employees or a member of an employee's family.

"At many of these events, particularly funerals, people really seem to appreciate our presence," said McNeill, a former Philadelphia police officer who spent more than 20 years as a Mummer. "You feel a sense of pride in representing the department and in knowing you're helping to present the department in a positive way."

The NJDOC's pipers are fiercely committed to the band, as evidenced by the fact that they provide their own instruments, kilts and accessories. Furthermore, as Schwartzer previously noted, playing the bagpipes presents a unique set of challenges.

"It's kind of like patting your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time," McNeill understated. "Playing the bagpipes requires coordination on several levels."

Bagpipers not only need to concentrate on the notes to the songs they are playing, but they must breathe properly and keep the right amount of pressure on the bag. Furthermore, mastering the entire set of skills, in tandem, must become second nature.

"It has to be a labor of love," Butts said. "That's especially true for those of us in the band. I've been to funerals 90 miles from home, the wind-chill was about minus-10 degrees and you're the face of the department on an occasion when a family is saying its final goodbye to a loved one. In that situation, it's about more than playing the bagpipes; it's about much, much more. You're part of that family's last remembrance. Believe me, that's a responsibility all of us take very seriously."

Unlike funerals, gatherings such as graduations give the entire band an opportunity to play together. The band members are well aware that on those occasions, their margin for error is virtually non-existent.



Performing at a recent Office of Training graduation ceremony are bagpipers (from left) Wes Butts, Stuart Carkeek and Dan McNeill.  
Photo by Allen Trach

"The bagpipes are hard enough to play in tune when you're by yourself, but when you have more than one, you have to be in tune with each other, or it sounds horrible," Allen cautioned. "Most often, when people say they don't like bagpipe music, it's because they've heard it played badly."

However, on those occasions when the band plays well, it's not unusual to see those in the audience moved to tears. One recent example

was the graduation of State Basic Correction Officer Training, Class 223, which was held in May 2011 at the War Memorial in Trenton. Coincidentally or not, it marked Schwartz's first appearance with the band.

"The feedback I got was that we sounded great, and I had to agree," Schwartz remembered. "In fact, I kind of got the chills."

Said Carkeek, a bagpiper for more than two decades: "When everybody is on, it's special. We do what we do in large part for the love of our brothers

and sisters in blue, particularly at cemeteries. But as a musician, when everything comes together, those are the moments you cherish."

The band's ever-expanding play list includes such patriotic songs as "God Bless America," "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Grand Old Flag." Traditional favorites include "Danny Boy," "Scotland Home" and "Minstrel Boy." Not surprisingly, most popular selection in the band's repertoire is "Amazing Grace."

"It's an ancient Scottish tune that lends itself real well to the bagpipes," said McNeill, who once played the "Star-Spangled Banner" at an event held at the NJDOC's Central Office headquarters.

"At this point, I guess most bagpipers can almost play it in their sleep."

Butts, for one, wouldn't be surprised to learn that McNeill could indeed play the bagpipes while asleep.

"We've got a good group of guys," Butts said. "Stu and Keith are talented, experienced players. Not only is Steve a fine musician, but he's got an ear [for the bagpipes]. And Dan, he's as good as it gets. Let me put it this way: If I died tomorrow, I'd want Dan to play at my funeral."





## **In Rhythm**

### **Drummers Make Sure the Beat Goes On**

By the time Tom Januszkiewicz became part of the New Jersey Department of Corrections Pipes and Drums Band, he had played in several bands and established himself as an accomplished drummer. His credentials, however, were of little help as he made the transition to the pipe band.

"When you're sitting at a floor kit, with drums and cymbals, you're basically keeping a simple beat," said Januszkiewicz, a senior correction officer (SCO) at Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility. When you're playing a snare drum in a pipe band, the cadence is so much different. It takes time to make that adjustment.

"Of course, you also have to get used to the motion," continued Januszkiewicz, who has been with the NJDOC's band since 2005. "Even though the equipment is cumbersome, you can't shuffle your feet when you're marching. You have to pick up your leg pretty high with each step you take.

"I don't think I really measured up when I first joined the band, but I stayed with it and eventually learned everything I needed to learn. I can't say that it's been an easy process, but it's definitely been worthwhile. I love it. We all do."



Keeping the beat for the NJDOC Pipes and Drums Band are (from left) Senior Correction Officer Mike Jordan, Lieutenant Sam Beaver and SCO James Russo.

Photo by Allen Trach

That would include fellow drummers Lieutenant Sam Beaver of the department's Office of County Services, SCO James Russo of the Central Transportation Unit, and SCO Mike Jordan of Garden State Youth Correctional Facility.

The primary responsibilities of the drummers are to provide rhythm and timing and to maintain the beat, which compliments and enhances the

sounds produced by the bagpipers.

"When it sounds right, it's a beautiful thing," said Beaver, a member of the band since 2003 who also plays the guitar and piano and has "toyed" with the bagpipes.

"As a musician, you become motivated to reach that level of proficiency again and again. Like I said, when the music is just spot-on, you can't beat the sound of a pipe and drum band."

More than seven years ago, Russo mentioned to Keith Allen, a bagpiper who has retired from the NJDOC but continues to periodically play with the band, that he played the drums. The following week, he became part of the band. Since then, he has taken particular pleasure in watching the ensemble evolve and continually improve.

"Everybody in the group is uniquely talented," Russo pointed out. "We all come from different musical backgrounds. To me, what makes it special is the way we're able to come together so well. I still get goose bumps every time we play 'Amazing Grace.'"

Januszkiewicz detects a value in what the band does that goes far beyond music.

"We do a lot of events with bands from other agencies," he noted, "and it's really nice meeting with and playing alongside people from the Port Authority, the State Police and various police departments. In doing so, we make sure we represent the Department of Corrections in a positive way."



## **Making Waves**

### **Edna Mahan Chair Began Affiliation with Facility as Lifeguard**

When a college sociology professor assigned her and her classmates to “go out into the field” during the summer of 1970, Nancy Fitzgibbons was looking for a place where she could utilize her extensive background in swimming. Somehow, that place turned out to be the Clinton Reformatory for Woman, now known as the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

Fitzgibbons would go on to become Surrogate of Sussex County, a position she has held since 1990. In addition, more than four decades after spending a summer as a lifeguard/recreation counselor at the facility – which, incidentally, hasn’t had a pool since the mid-1980s – Fitzgibbons serves as chair of Edna Mahan’s Board of Trustees.

“That summer, it was all about the swimming for me,” she recalled. “That was my first love, and one of the places I went to try to find a position was Clinton Farms, which had a swimming pool on grounds in those days. I was taken on a tour and introduced to the superintendent at the time. Sure enough, I was offered a job as a rec assistant for the summer and was assigned to the swimming pool.



**Nancy Fitzgibbons**

“A lot of the inmates were unable to swim, so they were apprehensive about the water,” Fitzgibbons continued. “But it was a beautiful pool, and I was someone who loved to swim, so I was pleased with the way things worked out.”

Not only did Fitzgibbons keep the job for the entire summer, but she actually spent a period of time living in a cottage on the prison grounds.

"It felt very much like a community back then, and it still does today," she said.

Fitzgibbons didn't realize it at the time, but that summer spent working in a correctional facility would be the first step on a path that led to a career in criminal justice and law enforcement.

She spent the following summer working as a counselor at the New Jersey Training School for Girls, which was located on the grounds that now house the New Jersey Department of Corrections' Central Office headquarters. From there, she went to work for the Sussex County Probation Department, at which point she concluded that "the criminal justice path was my destiny."

By 1976, Fitzgibbons had become director of the Sussex County Juvenile Detention Center, where she spent the next 10 years.

"It was a rather small operation, but it was three [eight-hour] shifts a day, seven days a week," she related, "and, as such, it represented a significant time commitment."

Fitzgibbons had become politically active, and even after she left the Detention Center in 1985 to focus on her family, "politics were very much a part of my life." It was through her political involvement, in fact, that she reconnected with New Jersey's correctional facility for state-sentenced women. The year was 1989.

"I was coming out of a function at a local restaurant," she began. "A small group of us were standing on the front steps, and the county chairman said there are some statewide agencies that are looking for board members. He starts reading the names of agencies, and when he said 'Edna Mahan,' I immediately said, 'I'll take that one.' I was tempted to say, 'Maybe I'll try something different,' but the truth is, my heart was always with Edna Mahan.

"I've been reappointed [to the Edna Mahan Board of Trustees] by every sitting governor since then, regardless of party. I just happened to be standing on the steps of a restaurant, and what transpired has become a big part of my life."

In 1990, approximately a year after that fateful evening, Fitzgibbons was elected County Surrogate, and she has been reelected in every election since. As judge of the Surrogate Court, her responsibilities range from appointing executors and administrators to oversee estates, to processing



adoptions, to administering funds in the Surrogate Co-mingled Trust Account (more than \$9 million).

"One of the things I brought to this position was my experience in the court system, having worked pretty extensively with judges and attorneys," said Fitzgibbons, whose work in administering funds has served her well in her capacity at Edna Mahan, where the board oversees the Inmate Welfare Fund.

During a recent graduation ceremony at Edna Mahan, Fitzgibbons and her fellow board members – Stephen Domovich, Mary Diehl and Nancy Connor – were seated at the dais. As chair, Fitzgibbons was among the featured speakers.

"Those women who genuinely want to help themselves are so grateful for the opportunities they receive," she said, "and as members of the board, it's important for us to share in their successes."

Edna Mahan Administrator William Hauck is among those who appreciate the support.

"For more than 20 years, Chairperson Fitzgibbons has been a tremendous asset to the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility, not only to the inmate population but to the staff and volunteers as well. I am honored to work with her and privileged to call her a friend and confidant."

Said Fitzgibbons: "From the very beginning, I've always enjoyed being associated with the facility. As long as I can continue to make a positive contribution, I hope to continue."





**SUMMER/FALL  
2011**

## **All in a Day's Work**

### **Fugitive Unit Investigator Brings Standoff to a Safe End**

The events of the afternoon of December 9, 2010, mirror something one might see on an episode of "Law and Order." However, this particular case was very real, and what occurred will forever be etched in the memory of Senior Investigator Al McBride Jr. of the New Jersey Department of Corrections' (NJDOC) Fugitive Unit.

"I was in the front, Bobby (Robert) Olmo was behind me, and the rest of the team was in a stack," McBride recalled. "I knocked on the door and



Senior Investigator Al McBride Jr.

announced our presence. When I opened the door, members of the team were saying go in, but something told me not to. As soon as I thought that, we heard, 'pat, pat, pat, pat' – between four and six rounds – and we realized he was shooting. He started again, and that's when we realized that he was firing toward the door."

The person shooting at McBride, his partner Senior Investigator Robert Olmo, and the other members of the United States Marshals' Fugitive Task Force was an escaped inmate from Maryland. After tracking him to an apartment complex in Hackensack and attempting to gain entrance into the unit where he was in hiding, the shooting incident quickly ensued.

An attempt to talk the suspect out was met with a chilling response: "I'm not coming out alive, you guys gotta come in and kill me."

"After that, every once in a while, he would shoot off a couple of rounds," said McBride, a 16-year veteran of the NJDOC.

"He kept saying he wasn't coming out alive," McBride added, "and then he said he had a child with him."

Realizing the gravity of the situation, the task force – and even a negotiator – worked diligently toward getting the 21-year-old fugitive to surrender. They eventually discovered that he did not have a child in the apartment.

"A few hours went by, and they couldn't get the guy out," McBride related.

"Then Danny Potucek, the team's lead inspector, said to me, 'Listen, I need you to go back in there and talk to him, because I think that you are the only person that can probably get through to this guy.'

"I went back in, and after talking to him for a while from the hallway, I said, 'You have to make this thing right. If you open the door, I'll come in and put the cuffs on you and walk you out.'"

While the suspect initially agreed to come out, he hesitated in doing so. His delay was an attempt to dispose of a cell phone and documents pertaining to another fugitive at large.

"It got tense," stated McBride. "The SWAT team was ready to go in. I told him, 'You need to come out, because they're about to come in. When I come in, you need to be on your stomach with your hands behind your head.'"

"He opened the door and got on the floor. When I went in, he looked at me, I looked at him, and I put the cuffs on him and walked him outside."

Forty-five minutes after McBride began to persuade the fugitive to surrender, the four-hour standoff, which summoned the presence of numerous state and local law enforcement personnel, came to an end. Thankfully, no one was injured.

"When I got home I thought to myself, 'Wow, you could have really been out of here if you had opened that door and gone in,'" McBride reflected. "I was up that night just thinking about it. Anything could have happened. If we had gone in, he would have definitely hit either me or somebody else. I've had incidents where I've talked people out before. But in my six years on the Fugitive Unit, thank God, this was the first time that I've been involved in an incident where someone was actually shooting at us."

With the fugitive in custody and the excitement of the day's events behind them, that night, McBride and his team members still had an opportunity to attend the Task Force's annual holiday party. Although they arrived several hours late, in light of the day's harrowing incident, their tardiness was not an issue.

The next day, it was back to work. Ironically, the individual that McBride's team was pursuing that day was also armed with a weapon. However, his apprehension went considerably smoother than the previous afternoon.

Fortunately, that day, there was no eruption of gunfire.

A month-and-a-half later, a room filled with NJDOC senior staff members looked on as McBride received a special commendation from Commissioner Gary M. Lanigan. The honor took place at the department's monthly CHANGE meeting on the morning of January 28.

"I would like to take this opportunity to commend you for your heroic actions on December 9, 2010," the Commissioner said. "Your professionalism, valor and bravery resulted in a safe ending to a dangerous situation and reflect positively upon you and the New Jersey Department of Corrections."

Some months later, McBride reflected on that eventful afternoon. "It's all in a day's work," he concluded.







**SUMMER/FALL  
2011**

## **Healthy Living**

### **Bayside State Prison Observes Men's Health Month**

It was early June, and National Men's Health Month had already begun. However, that did not prevent Bayside State Prison staff from coordinating a program to mark the occasion.

"We were sitting in the dining room having lunch, and Sharon [Repko] mentioned that June is Men's Health Month," recalled Evelyn Davis, then-administrator of Bayside State Prison.

"She said that she wanted to do something to give information to the inmates," continued Davis, who now serves as the administrator of the Central Reception and Assignment Facility. "From there, as we were talking, we came up with the idea of a 'Men's Health Day' seminar."

Repko, a regional nurse manager with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), is an advanced practice nurse with close to 40 years of experience in the field of nursing.

*"We wanted to give inmates  
a toolkit of information..."*

"Women's Health Month is publicized everywhere, but there doesn't seem to be as much emphasis on Men's Health Month," stated Repko, who has been at Bayside for two years.

Repko and Davis envisioned a program that would fall right in line with the goal of Men's Health Month, which is "to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and encourage early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys."

"We wanted to give inmates a toolkit of information that they would have and be able to take home with them," Repko said.

A two-and-a-half hour seminar was extended to inmates in Bayside's minimum-custody units – those who were close to transitioning to halfway houses and would have a greater need for the community resources that would be shared during the program.

"We wanted a group that self-selected to attend," commented Repko. "We didn't want it to just be a day where somebody said, 'I'm gonna go and get refreshments.' We put up flyers up in the units, instructing those interested to drop a slip in the box when they came to see medical. It was a way for us to have all the slips in one central place. After the sign-up deadline, we gathered the slips and arranged for the inmates to attend."

More than 100 inmates responded to the invitation to hear presentations on prostate cancer; sexually transmitted diseases; smoking cessation; drugs and alcohol; spirituality; and health-related community resources.

Eighty of the inmates who signed up for the June 29 seminar were in attendance.

"The age range of those who attended varied," Davis said. "We had a lot of inmates who were 50 years old and above, but we also had a younger group of inmates."

While there were several speakers from within the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC), most of the volunteer seminar presenters were from outside of the department.

On hand to discuss prostate cancer was Joe Profetto of the South Jersey Healthcare (SJH) Scarpa Regional Cancer Pavilion. Profetto, the men's cancer coordinator at SJH and a prostate health educator, provided an enlightening overview of what is presently the second-most common type of cancer among men in the United States.

"He was excellent," stated Davis. "He talked very candidly about his own experience with prostate cancer. He also gave a lot of information to the inmates; things that they need to know, such as the urgency for screening. The inmates asked a lot of questions concerning the information that they received. They were very attentive and receptive."

A host of others, including representatives from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, the Vineland City Health Department and the clergy community, were also present that morning to discuss various health-related issues of importance.

Edie Schneider, the infectious disease nurse at Bayside, served as moderator of the seminar. Both Davis and Repko noted that Schneider was instrumental in the planning phase.

"Edie did quite a bit of research prior to the seminar," recalled Repko. "On that day, she had lists of available services throughout the entire state where, once back in their communities, inmates can go for help with their medicine, their general care, and mental health problems. Each inmate received one of those packages when he arrived at the program."

Following the presentations – which were 15 to 20 minutes in length – and a question-and-answer period, inmates had an opportunity to meet the speakers and talk one-on-one. There was also a literature table on which information pertaining to the various topics was made available.

"Everything really fit like a puzzle and flowed nicely the way it was laid out," Repko said. "The inmates were attentive and inquisitive about all of the topics. I think they were glad to receive the information, and I think they'll use it."

"We had to coordinate so many things," continued Repko, "but the two departments (UMDNJ and NJDOC) worked together, and it all went smoothly. It is my hope that the seminar has opened the door for other educational programs related to health."

Diabetes care and depression are among the subjects that could be explored in future health seminars.

"All of the topics that were discussed are very real issues that men need to start dealing with right now," Davis related. "Oftentimes, inmates will say, 'If I only had the opportunity and the support, I could do better.' Well, that's exactly what the Men's Health Day program provided. The seminar offered inmates the resources they need to keep themselves physically, mentally and spiritually healthy."

"During my time with the department, I've seen career days and similar programs, but never a Men's Health Day," added Davis, who is approaching her 22<sup>nd</sup> year with the NJDOC.

There are plans to make the program an annual event at Bayside.

"I believe we brought the element of caring to the inmates by bringing in speakers to discuss topics that are important," concluded Repko. "I think we conveyed to them how much we really do want them to be healthy in every

way possible and be out of here. Also, we were able to educate them, and for me the crucial element of any health care program is teaching. The healing part they'll take ownership of themselves as they become more health conscious. We can only give them the information and hope that they will follow up."







**SUMMER/FALL  
2011**

## **Continuing Education**

### **NJDOC Staff Participates in Domestic Violence Certificate Program**

When it comes to examining an issue as sensitive and multi-faceted as domestic violence, there are no simple answers.

"You're always learning something new with domestic violence," stated Lisania Mejia, a social worker at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women. "For example, healthcare, physical symptoms, long-term impacts, teen violence, etc."

Mejia was among a select group of 11 individuals, many of whom are New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) social workers, who completed a nine-month "Violence Against Women" training course that concluded on October 12.



Participants display their "Violence Against Women" training certificates.

Photo by Scott Franks

"I loved the training," Mejia noted. "I've been in the field of domestic violence for the past four years. The training has helped me better understand different issues, like the impact on children and substance abuse. It has made me think more outside of the box and look at things from different perspectives."

The certificate program was just one component of the "Saving Our Sisters" grant, funded by the New Jersey

Department of Law and Public Safety's Division of Criminal Justice. It was designed to enhance training participants' knowledge base of the various aspects and issues pertaining to domestic violence. Completion of the training resulted in an introductory certification in "Violence Against Women" and 40 continuing education units.

"This does not make training participants licensed domestic violence counselors," said Director Darcella Sessomes of the NJDOC Office of Transitional Services. "This is just the introductory level. There is a state level training where you take course work, and then you also have to do a certain amount of hours of volunteering, either in a domestic violence shelter or working one of the hotlines. After that, then you can get the state's certification. But this is the introductory to expose people to the issues."

The certificate program, which was instructed by Master- and Ph.D.-level staff from Rutgers University, was comprised of 10 workshops specific to domestic violence. Among the issues examined during the training were mental health, ethics, financial empowerment and the impact of violence against women on children.

"A lot of people think that domestic violence is about a self-esteem issue with women," Sharon Chamberlayne, also a social worker at Edna Mahan, related. "But when a woman doesn't leave, it's not only about self-esteem. There are a lot of things are going on in her mind, such as her children, who's going to care for her family, and is she going to have the resources and the income once she leaves. So it's not just about the self-esteem. In fact, self-esteem might be a small amount of what's going on. There are other issues."

The first two trainings were held at Edna Mahan, and the remaining full-day sessions were conducted at the NJDOC's Central Office headquarters. Each component of the training was instructed by a different facilitator.

In order to be considered for the certificate program, staff members were required to submit a one-page paper to Sessomes, who also participated in the training.

"When we received the grant, we were really supposed to focus at first just on Edna Mahan," stated Sessomes, who has been with the department for seven years. "But we were able to convince our funders that the issue is more than just women who are incarcerated, and that we really want to make an impact on staff. So we were able to open the training program up a little bit. The grant is for us to provide domestic violence information and counseling services not only to the female inmates at Edna Mahan, but to any other person who needs information, whether it is an inmate or a civilian or custody staff member. It doesn't matter who the person is, the goal is to reduce the number of violent incidents."

Other trainees included staff from the NJDOC's Office of Victim Services and the New Jersey State Parole Board. Also among the group was Sergeant Nanette Buchanan of Northern State Prison.

During her seven years in Sea Girt, Buchanan, an 18-year veteran of the NJDOC, instructed a number of courses, including domestic violence. She welcomed the opportunity to bring a different perspective to the dialogue.

"I gained a little more insight about the realms of domestic violence and the resources that are available," said Buchanan. "That information is really needed. If you're being abused, you need to heal. And if you're battering, you need to heal. It's a sickness, and we need to deal with it as such, so that people can get well."

The department is now exploring the possibility of the next level of the "Violence Against Women" training.

"We were very fortunate to have this type of training brought to the NJDOC," said Sessomes, "especially, in light of the economy and the tight budget in our state. To attend these workshops on the outside is very expensive. When we responded to the grant's request for proposal, we included the training program in our offer, and the grant was approved in totality. We are now researching whether to offer the advanced level.

"What occurs outside of the NJDOC impacts the work environment, too. When co-workers are preoccupied with what is going on at home, the work environment is compromised. The potential for carelessness, and perhaps even danger, is heightened, and everyone is affected."



## **A Capella**

### **Officer Makes Her Voice Heard During Class 223 Commencement**

The saga began with Kelly Hicks singing Chaka Kahn's "I'm Every Woman" while mopping a floor. Shortly thereafter, on the morning of May 4, she was delivering a memorable rendition of the National Anthem on the stage of the War Memorial in Trenton on the day she and her fellow members of State Basic Correction Officer Training, Class 223, graduated.



Correction Officer Recruit Kelly Hicks sings the National Anthem at the War Memorial in Trenton on the day she and her fellow members of Class 223 graduated.

"I guess it sounds like something out of a movie," admitted a smiling Hicks, who was assigned to Mid-State Correctional Facility. "Even now, I have a little trouble believing it myself."

One evening, during her time as a trainee at the Correctional Staff Training Academy in Sea Girt, Hicks and others were making more noise than they should have been making while cleaning their barracks. That led to a visit from one of the instructors, who did not appear to be amused.

"When he showed up, we all stood at attention," Hicks said. "He asked me what I was doing, so I told him I was mopping the floor and singing. He said, 'Let me hear you sing.' So I ended up having to sing 'I'm Every Woman' for him. Needless to say, I couldn't keep a straight face, and neither could any of the other girls in the barracks. So we ended up having to do pushups, sit-ups, crunches and mountain climbers."

Despite the turmoil and the ensuing punishment, word of Hicks' vocal talents began to spread. She was asked to sing for Sgt. Jay Aronow and then for



Captain Richard Shephard. During those sessions, her song of choice was the "Star Spangled Banner."

Shephard, the highest ranking officer on the Training Academy staff, has a vivid recollection of Hicks' audition.

"When I heard her, I remember thinking, 'My goodness. She missed her calling. She should be making a living with that voice.'" he said.

Although numerous members of Hicks' family are seasoned performers – including her mother, her sister and her aunt – she is not. She knew she'd be nervous when called upon during the ceremony, particularly because she would be singing without musical accompaniment.

However, she also knew it was a request she wouldn't consider declining.

"That was the first time I sang in front of an audience that large," said Hicks, recalling that a crowd approaching 1,000 gathered for the graduation. "I sang in church, and I've always loved to sing, but I'm not someone who ever sang in the spotlight, so to speak.

"It was exciting, because I considered it such an honor that I was asked to sing the National Anthem," she continued. "Not only that, but it was amazing to me how much my classmates wanted me to sing. So many of them said, 'We want someone from our class to sing. You *have* to do it.' It was inspiring to know that everyone was behind me. I wanted to do as well as possible just to make my class proud."

Hicks' parents captured her performance on video. Ironically, the entertainment value of the videotape doesn't end with the words "...and the home of the brave."

"After I finish singing, you can hear a voice on the tape – someone who must have been sitting by my parents – say, 'Wow. She's in the wrong business.' I had to laugh," she said.

Hicks added that she never considered a singing career. In fact, she always intended to work in law enforcement.

"It was a matter of making sure the time was right to pursue the career I always knew I wanted," said the 30-year-old Hicks, who previously worked in retail. "This is my time."



## **An Exercise in Preparedness**

### **Southern State Correctional Facility Hosts Multi-Agency Drill**

As dusk approached, nine fire companies and a local rescue squad responded in rural Cumberland County to a dire 911 call. Fire had broken out at Southern State Correctional Facility (SSCF), and a correction officer was missing.

Fortunately, in this instance, the “fire” and “missing correction officer” were part of a multi-agency drill conducted annually, all in an attempt to address the many unique problems that would present themselves in the event of an actual fire at a correctional facility.

With an inmate population of more than 2,000 and a staff numbering approximately 600, the potential for tragedy exists. When SSCF came into operation in 1983, it marked a new concept for the state in two areas. The facility’s entire construction consists of prefabricated units, and all inmates are housed dormitory style instead of in individual cells.



Fire departments and a rescue squad arrive at Southern State Correctional Facility as a multi-agency drill unfolds.

During the drill, prison officials were tasked with evacuating more than 150 inmates before fire apparatus was permitted on the grounds. In addition, a unified command post needed to be activated. A rescue dummy — clad in firefighter turnout gear — was utilized to represent the “missing” correction officer.

A Code 21 was called, and as evacuation of the unit in question began, a stand-up count was conducted to ensure that all inmates were accounted

for. Electricity was cut off. As the drill began, recreation in the gym and the big yard was ongoing, necessitating not only the evacuation of the “burning” building but the hundreds of inmates who were in the recreation areas.

While the shift commander activated the command post, a standard operating procedure for all unusual events, a picture of the “missing” correction officer was obtained. The tower officer advised by radio that the first responding fire company was at the gate of the prison.

Institutional medical staff members were called to the scene, and the main compound was secured. Stand-up counts continued, as firefighters began interior search and rescue efforts. All radios were tuned to the same channel — a crucial component of the operation. Two more fire companies arrived with ladder trucks, and 48 minutes into the drill, firefighters removed the rescue dummy, aka, the “missing” correction officer. EMS personnel quickly administered aid, and as the rescue squad exited with the “patient,” who was positively identified as the “missing” correction officer, the outer perimeter was checked completely. Security patrols were dispatched to both access roads leading to the prison.

Three-and-a-half hours later, fire department operations are concluded, stand-up counts were again conducted, and inmates were returned to the unit where the “fire” was detected. Indeed, all components of the fire response plan were completed, notifications were made, and all civilians were accounted for.



EMS personnel wheel a “patient” – actually a dummy clad in firefighter turnout gear – to a waiting rescue squad.



Firefighters utilized the prison’s dry hydrant system during the drill.

The prison has a dry hydrant system in place that is designed to allow fire companies to supply water without having to open any gates, thus maintaining the secure integrity of the facility. The dry hydrant system worked perfectly, and more than 25,000 gallons were pumped through the system.

Considered a success, the drill helped to better prepare all involved for a real event — an event that indeed has precedence. In August 2003, a unit similar to the one utilized for this drill was destroyed by a fire that originated in a ceiling exhaust fan.

Participating agencies in this year's drill were the New Jersey Department of Corrections (custody and civilian staff of Southern State Correctional Facility), Leesburg Volunteer Fire Department (Vol. FD), Heisslerville Vol. FD, Maurice River Township Office of Emergency Management, Port Norris Vol. FD, Port Elizabeth Vol. FD, Belle Plain Rescue Squad, Mauricetown Vol. FD, Belle Plain Vol. FD, Cumberland Vol. FD and Laurel Lake Vol. FD.







**SUMMER/FALL  
2011**

## **Water, Water Everywhere**

### **Hydroponics Irrigation Program Thrives at Bayside State Prison**

As defined by Webster's Dictionary, hydroponics is "the cultivation of plants in water containing dissolved inorganic nutrients." But for the dozen-plus inmates involved in this program at Bayside State Prison, hydroponics spells a chance to work out of doors, and for many, who hail from urban areas of the state, to learn about the cultivation of flowers, trees and vegetables.

Were it not for the fencing, orange uniforms and correction officers, this section of the prison, formerly the site of the Aquaculture program, would look like any other agrarian enterprise in this section of rural Cumberland County. Acres of land have been tilled, seeds planted, and nine greenhouses are a flurry of activity each morning, as inmates check temperatures and maintain aeration.

At the center of this agricultural whirlwind is instructor Mike Simmerman, a farmer who hails from Elmer. Simmerman observes, lends advice and oversees all operations. However, he is quick to point out that this operation "belongs to the inmates. It is really on-the-job training."

More than 13 years ago, a partnership developed between Bayside State Prison and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency within the United States Department of the Interior that is dedicated to the management of fish, wildlife and habitats. Seedlings, soil, pots and peat moss would be supplied by the Wildlife Service, and technical know-how and labor provided by staff and inmates at

---

*The greenhouses were literally created from scrap metal, concrete, used wood and bricks garnered from the prison grounds.*

Bayside. The trees and foliage are then provided to private, municipal and county lands to benefit fish and wildlife conservation and to aid in the fragile eco-systems of New Jersey. Twenty-five to 35 species of trees indigenous to New Jersey are now grown and used for habitat restoration projects throughout the Garden State. White pine, birch and black gum trees are

among those begun as seedlings, and as one wanders through the greenhouses, trees in every stage of development can be observed, tended to by inmates until they are planted in the wild.

This association between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bayside clearly is a worthy enterprise, but indeed, other benefits — some easy to see, others less obvious — have been realized in this corner of the prison.

If the verbiage “green” and “recycle” are the watchwords for 2011, surely the Hydroponics Irrigation program stands as a prime example of those concepts, as the greenhouses were literally created from scrap metal, concrete, used wood and bricks garnered from the prison grounds.

Of the nine greenhouses, three are cold frame — that is, without heat — while the other six are heated. As Simmerman, who was “driving a tractor when I was 8 years old,” points out, “Each inmate spends two weeks in the greenhouses; they learn about the moisture needs and the heating. It’s easier for them to learn it *before* I put a book in front of them.” Indeed, this course is 75 percent on-the-job training and 25 percent classroom work. Mandatory as well is the safety course film that all are required to watch, which explains the precautions that must be taken with tools, mowers and tractors.

The film is also requisite watching for all inmates who work outside details. In addition, a plumber has been brought in to teach inmates, which dovetails well with the need to know about the heating and pipes that run through the greenhouses.

Perhaps most remarkable of all, little or no monies are expended here; in fact, most of the plants come from seeds harvested by the inmates. Rows and rows of tomato plants actually came from seeds from a sliced tomato on an inmate’s lunch. Yet another greenhouse is filled with marigolds whose seeds were harvested from last year’s crops. Watermelon, pepper plants, squash and, yes, pineapples are also thriving, thanks to the judicious and careful saving of seeds.

Simmerman estimates that nearly \$75,000 annually is saved by providing this fresh produce to the institution for inmate and staff meals. What cannot be calculated, however, is the impact on the inmates, many of whom only know “concrete and broken glass,” as one described his neighborhood.

“I learned a lot from hydroponics. When I go home, I would like to grow vegetables in planters in order to cut down on grocery bills,” “Tom” from

Rahway relates. "I never realized how much was involved, the daily upkeep. It will help me in the future."

"Frank" from Mercer County, who spent some time on a farm as a child, adds: "I love coming out here. It's like another world. There's a lot more to growing things than walking into a store, and there's more work to this than you would expect. If you want, put a bed out here, I'd stay here!"

"Frank" is proud of the hanging plants he has created from seed. "I'm learning something, something I can use when I get out of here," he says.

Having spent three years at Bayside, "Jim" has worked as a landscaper. "I like to put my hands in the earth," the Trenton native relates. "When I came here, it was the first time I had put my feet on terra firma in seven years."

Even though he had been a landscaper at one time, "Jim" was amazed by the transformation from seed to flowering. "Just overnight, these plants grow," he says. "There's a lot you can learn from them. It will be advantageous somewhere along the line to know how things grow when my incarceration is over."

Senior Correction Officer Steven Fote, who worked "inside" the prison for many years, and Sgt. George LeBron are assigned to the Hydroponics Irrigation detail. Both offer praise for the program.

"The inmates keep busy, and they're learning something," LeBron says.

Fote notes that "I've picked up some pointers for my own garden at home."

Administrator Evelyn Davis is enthusiastic as well.

"From the first time that I was really able to tour this shop, I was thoroughly impressed, just seeing the way the inmates are able to learn a skill — a skill that they can use in the future," says Davis, who recently moved from Bayside to the Central Reception and Assignment Facility. "They leave here with the knowledge of planting and seeding as well as a certificate of completion. This program is second to none. Growing vegetables that come back to the institution really indicates what a committed teacher Mr. Simmerman is. He has compassion and the ability to help the inmates even beyond what he teaches them. This is truly a worthy reentry effort."







**SUMMER/FALL  
2011**

## **The End of an Era**

### **NJDOC Stock Market Challenge Crashes**

Seventeen games and nine-and-a-half years later, the New Jersey Department of Corrections' Stock Market Challenge (SMC), as we know it, has come to an end.

"Change happens," said Dr. William M. Kempey, administrator of the New Jersey SMC and professor of economics at Kean University. "Let me thank the players for all the joy you've brought me."

The final awards ceremony, held at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility on February 22, marked the official close of the program, which had been sponsored by the New Jersey Council on Economic Education (NJCEE).

Discontinued because of the NJCEE's inability to financially support the program any further, the SMC has captured the attention and minds of hundreds of inmates since being introduced to the NJDOC in the fall of 2002. All NJDOC facilities, including the now-closed Riverfront State Prison, have participated in the program on some level or another.

The SMC is an educational simulation that teaches about the stock markets, the American economic system and the global economy by giving students the

opportunity to invest a hypothetical \$100,000 in a portfolio of common stocks listed on the New York and American stock exchanges and the NASDAQ stock market.

*"Let me thank the players for all the joy you've brought me."*

"I am hopeful that all of the students who have been involved with the program over the years have learned something from the curriculum," related then-Director Patti Friend of the NJDOC's Office of Educational Services at the awards event.

"I thank Dr. Kempey for his commitment to the program," continued Friend, who has since retired.

"We congratulate the teachers for the great job they have done and for all their hard work," stated Hugh DeHaven of the Office of Educational Services.

The fact that Garden State had the honor of hosting the last awards ceremony was no coincidence, as one of the youth facility's six teams emerged the victor in the NJCEE's final stock market competition.

"On behalf of Administrator [Bernard] Goodwin, I congratulate the first-place team on being first during the 'final era' of the program," stated then-Associate Administrator C. Ray Hughes, who now serves as the administrator of Southern State Correctional Facility.

South Woods and Bayside state prisons achieved second- and third-place status, respectively.

"I take a little bit of pride at each awards ceremony," admitted Kempey, as he presented trophies and certificates to each of the four team members and a plaque to the co-captains.

Also awarded a trophy was Garden State teacher Art Miller, who served as advisor to the winning Garden State team and who has been involved with the SMC program from day one.

"I knew when the stock market class started in 2002 that it was going to be a success," reflected Miller, a 21-year veteran with the NJDOC, who estimates that more than 250 Garden State inmates have participated in the program.

"The greatest thing is the inmates' interest," Miller continued. "What these simulations do is they get the education to kind of sneak up on the guys. It's not like saying open this book, and read it. The simulation kind of lures them in, because it's a game. I give the students the foundation and let them go from there. I have witnessed a lot of growth and maturity in those who have participated in the program."

"When I started the class, I didn't even know what a stock was," co-captain Randy Ramirez said at the ceremony before explaining to guests and fellow Garden State opponents the various strategies his team used to win the game.

“Nothing worth having is easy to get,” stated Emendo Hill, the team’s other co-captain. “We just kept researching and gaining knowledge.”

Both Ramirez and Hill have taken part in several SMC competitions and consider the lessons they’ve learned about economics, and the importance of long-term saving and investing, to be priceless.

While the relationship with the NJCEE has come to an end, the Office of Educational Services continues to utilize what has come to be valued as a great learning tool. In the department’s youth facilities, in particular, the SMC has become an effective mechanism for teaching personal financial literacy, a state-mandated educational component.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education’s Web site, the goal of the personal financial literacy standard is for students to “develop skills and strategies that promote personal and financial responsibility related to financial planning, savings, investment and charitable giving in the global economy.” The SMC assists the Office of Educational Services in meeting this goal with respect to the department’s school-age population.

And so, with eyes fixated and ears attuned to Wall Street – yes, even in this economy – the challenge continues, and competition remains fierce throughout the various institutions of the NJDOC.

